



# AETC News Clips

## Randolph AFB, Texas



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### 'Sharing the joy of flight'

Web Posted: 11/05/2005 12:00 AM CST

Scott Huddleston

Express-News Staff Writer

As acrobatic pilot Sean Tucker gazes at photos of his biplane whizzing over the Statue of Liberty, Grand Canyon and other landmarks, there's a sense of fulfillment, knowing he has one of the world's greatest jobs.

Other emotions take over when he sees images, from 1999 and 2000, of his plane by the World Trade Center towers.

"It breaks my heart," he said. "It's eerie, to think there's so much hate in the world."

When he performs, as he will today and Sunday at Randolph AFB's 75th Anniversary Air Show, his focus is on the skills he's used to thrill and inspire crowds for 29 years, he said.

At first, his aerobatic moves might seem those of a twitchy daredevil. But Tucker, playing the role of artist, technician and spiritual guru in his performances, was named in 2003 one of 25 "Living Legends of Flight," along with Neil Armstrong and Chuck Yeager, by the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum.

Tucker, 53, talks about his disciplined training regimen and respect for boundaries.

He felt a calling to fly at 14, on a flight with his father. Their plane broke through the fog over Los Angeles. A rising sun pierced through the haze, creating an array of colors.

"Right then, I knew there was a God. I got a sense of what flying was all about," Tucker said.

He had a fear of stalling his plane as he learned to fly, but overcame that by studying acrobatic flight. He did his first air show in 1976, but admits he wasn't very good. On a practice flight in 1979 he went into a bad spin and bailed out.

"I had no respect for the margins, but I learned," he said.

Tucker, based in Salinas, Calif., now runs a flying school and performs about 20 times a year in a lightweight, custom-built plane sponsored by Oracle technologies.

He pulls up to 10 Gs of force and 8 negative Gs, the same stresses jet pilots endure. To avoid injury, he runs and lifts weights, and practices his 13-minute act daily.

Tucker said he's fractured two vertebrae and hurt his shoulder flying. G forces can cause a blackout, detached retina, embolism or broken blood vessel.



Billy Calzada/Express-News

Sean Tucker, flying his Oracle Challenger, soars over downtown San Antonio's Tower of the Americas on Thursday during a demonstration flight in preparation for the Randolph Air Show.

*San Antonio Express News*

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His aerial "sky dance" spotlights his "centrifuge," an end-over-end tumble at 230 mph. Letting gravity take over, he can fly backward at 100 mph. His "double hammerhead" puts his plane through two cartwheels.

Each move must fit into a fluid, choreographed act.

"You have to stay anchored and do this for the right reasons," he said. "It's not showing off. It's sharing the joy of flight."

Tucker is to perform about 1:30 p.m. today and Sunday. The air show is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. The Air Force Thunderbirds, a precision team that flies F-16 fighters, will perform at 3 p.m.

Tucker, who has a wife and two grown children, said he hopes to perform for several more years.

"We've seen the top of every significant landmark in the United States," noted his chase pilot, Brian Norris, who flies at Tucker's wing for photo shoots.

Except for one. Federal parks restrictions have kept Tucker from being photographed near Mount Rushmore.

"We have to figure out a way to do it," Tucker said.

It's one more challenge for a pilot who likes to test limits

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### Thousands thrilled at air show display

Web Posted: 11/06/2005 12:00 AM CST

Joseph S. Stroud

Express-News Staff Writer

Jim LeRoy remembers circling in his plane and realizing that the worst had happened.

"I just turned around and I was alone in the sky, and there were two fiery holes in the ground," he recalled.

That was less than four months ago, on July 10, at an air show in Saskatchewan, Canada. Two of LeRoy's close friends, his partners in a performance called "Masters of Disaster," Jimmy Franklin and Bobby Younkin, collided in midair and fell to their deaths that day.

On Saturday, LeRoy was airborne again, at the 75th Anniversary Air Show at Randolph AFB, rolling and tumbling and leaving cursive vapor trails across a bright blue sky.

A throng estimated at more than 125,000 people thrilled at the spectacle, which ended with a command performance by the Thunderbirds, the Air Force's precision flight demonstration team. They closed the show with six F-16 jets crisscrossing at speeds in excess of 500 mph.

A repeat performance is scheduled for today, again with no admission charge.

On Saturday, LeRoy performed a solo flight that lasted about 15 minutes, then took part in a modified version of "Masters of Disaster" called "Tribute to the Masters."

In the tribute, LeRoy and fellow pilot John Moore flew back and forth across the tarmac, as low as 10 feet above the ground at times, as flame and smoke billowed up around them.

One pyrotechnic blast ignited by a speeding jet truck below created a cloud dark enough to cast an enormous shadow across the crowd. The planes emerged from the smoke at either end as speakers blared rock 'n' roll and, at one point, the sound of dogs barking.

Randolph officials said the depth of the lineup at this year's air show makes it a premier event nationally.

"I would stack this air show up against any air show in the country," said Capt. Paul Villagran, chief of public affairs for the 12th Flying Training Wing at Randolph. "We've got four or five acts today that would be headline acts at any other air show.

"The masters, they're it for some shows. They would be the closer."



Bahram Mark Sobhani/Express-News

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds F-16 Demonstration Team performs during the 75th Anniversary Air Show at Randolph AFB.

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The air show allows the base to thank its neighbors in the community for a relationship that has lasted 75 years, Villagran said, and to remind them that the world's finest fighting force works in their midst.

Randolph, one of the nation's oldest Air Force facilities, provides pilot instructor training and combat systems officer training for Air Force and Navy pilots who fly bomber, fighter, airlift and tanker aircraft. The base hosts more than 30 units, including the Air Force Recruiting Service. About 40 new recruits made their commitment to the Air Force on Saturday shortly before the Thunderbirds took to the air to close the show.

This wasn't LeRoy's first time flying since the accident. The crash occurred on a Sunday, and LeRoy said he was flying by the next Thursday.

"This is my job," said the 44-year old Chicago native, who now lives in Florida with his wife and 2-year-old son. "It's hard to lose a couple of your best friends at once, but this is my job, this is my living. They'd have done the same thing."

Flying at air shows is dangerous work, LeRoy said, but the crash was a fluke. He declined to discuss it in detail because aviation officials are investigating.

"Both guys made mistakes at exactly the same time," he said. "And this business is very unforgiving."

LeRoy said his wife knows the risks involved in his work and accepts them. He said the only time he had difficulty flying again was the week after the crash.

When he settled back down on the runway after his solo act, he got the same feeling that came over him after the crash.

"When I landed, I landed by myself, and I just had a real sinking feeling in my gut," he said. "I got it again that first time when I landed."

LeRoy, who shaves his head and has a neatly trimmed fu manchu moustache, plans to work this winter on a new version of "Masters of Disaster" called "Masters of Extreme." He's optimistic about it but doesn't know if it will compare to the old act, which he described as "magical."

"It clicked from the beginning," he said. "It was just a special thing."

Sitting beside the runway in his bright yellow pilot shirt and aviator sunglasses, LeRoy spoke philosophically about losing friends in what he acknowledged is a very dangerous business.

He took comfort in his belief that Franklin and Younkin lived more in a single summer than most people do in a lifetime.

"It would be tougher for us, the way we're made, to not fly," LeRoy said. "That would hurt."

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### **Then & Now: 'West Point of the Air'**

Web Posted: 11/06/2005 12:00 AM CST

**Scott Huddleston**

**Express-News Staff Writer**

Nearly 80 years ago, the U.S. War Department was looking for land for a grand new air base, where pilots could hone their skills as combat aviators.

Congress was willing to fund it, but wanted land to be donated.

Dallas, Fort Worth and cities in California and Florida competed with San Antonio in the 1920s to get the new base.

Because the Army deemed San Antonio a prime locale, the local Chamber of Commerce acquired land northeast of the city.

To fund the purchase of more than 2,300 acres to be deeded to the Army, the city pledged back taxes and borrowed money from banks.

This weekend, Randolph AFB is observing its 75th birthday with an air show that celebrates its role as the "Showplace of the Air Force" in defending freedom here and abroad.

The Air Corps Act of 1926 created two new general posts and provided for expansion of the nation's air might. One of the new generals, Brig. Gen. Frank P. Lahm, found that Kelly and Brooks fields could not handle the expansion. Both had been created during World War I.

About that time, 1st Lt. Harold Clark, a motor field dispatch officer at Kelly, drew plans for an "air city" on the back of old dispatch sheets, according to Air Force historians. Lahm was so impressed, he made Clark the architect in charge.

Budgeted at \$15 million to \$20 million, the base was to be the largest Army Corps of Engineers project since the Panama Canal, completed in 1914.

A panel formed to name the base included Capt. William Millican Randolph, an Austin native, Texas A&M graduate and pilot considered a military aviation pioneer. On Feb. 17, 1928, while returning to Kelly, he crashed his AT-4 on takeoff from Gorman Field in North Texas and was killed.

The base was named for Randolph, who's buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

The artful, symmetrical design of Randolph Field, with circular, concentric streets surrounded by roads in rectangular grids, with runways on the east and west sides, was meant to get planes to and from hangars safely and quickly.

The June 1930 edition of the San Antonian, a magazine of the Chamber of Commerce, called the coming dedication of the new "West Point of the Air" the "greatest and most epochal event in the entire history of military aviation."

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In a letter to the chamber printed in the magazine, Secretary of War Patrick Hurley praised the city.

"The location of this great flying school near San Antonio is more than a tribute to the natural advantages of that region; it reflects also the vision and the civic energy of its citizens," Hurley wrote.

An estimated 15,000 people attended a dedication June 20, 1930. According to the San Antonio Light, Gov. Dan Moody predicted, "The future of our whole country may depend on a well-trained Air Corps."

"All that we are to become may depend on the men who are trained on this field," he told the crowd.

One of the most famous buildings in the Air Force is Randolph's Building 100, known as the "Taj Mahal" for its resemblance to India's 17th-century mausoleum, considered one of seven wonders of the world.

The "Taj," on the base's central Washington Circle, is a two-story Spanish colonial revival structure with a 170-foot tower that's capped by a blue-and-gold mosaic dome roof and contains a 500,000-gallon water tank.

Clark's design for the building, completed in late 1931, was refined by a local architectural firm led by the father-son team of Atlee and Robert Ayers. The firm also designed some of San Antonio's noted landmarks, including the Municipal Auditorium and Tower Life Building.

Randolph was a center for aviation medicine and, during World War II, basic and primary flight training. It also graduated more than 15,000 instructors for primary, basic and advanced flight training.

The 12th Flying Training Wing has been the base's host unit since 1972. Today, the wing's mission is to train the world's best aviators. It qualifies instructors to help young pilots earn their wings and conducts combat systems officer training for Air Force and Navy pilots who fly bomber, fighter, airlift and tanker aircraft.

The base also has more than 30 other units, including the Air Education and Training Command, Air Force Personnel Center and Air Force Recruiting Service.

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### DEL RIO NEWS HERALD

#### **Laughlin commander nominated for a star**

[By Bill Sontag](#)

Published November 5, 2005, p. 1

Col. Tod D. Wolters, commander of the 47th Flying Training Wing, Laughlin Air Force Base, was nominated Friday by President George W. Bush to receive the rank of brigadier general.

Subject to senate confirmation, Wolters' promotion may not be finalized for a year, but the process is officially underway. A clear trend may be seen among Laughlin commanders' promotions to a one-star position, but Wolters' nomination comes early in his tenure here.

Wolters took command of the 47th Flying Training Wing in July 2004, and has guided the growth of base infrastructure as part of an ever-expanding construction program at Laughlin.

A sprawling, technologically sophisticated athletic complex opened, and was re-dedicated as the Losano Fitness Center. The naming idea was conceived and proposed by Wolters to the family of deceased Airman First Class Raymond Losano, and brought to fruition in August ceremonies.

A dramatic, soaring wing headquarters building is taking shape on Liberty Drive, soon to replace the current wing headquarters with twice as much floorspace and a visually attractive and imposing building. Ground was broken for this facility shortly after Wolters' arrival as commander.

Wolters has nourished the cordial relationship between the community and the base, noted as exemplary among his peers at other Air Force installations.

Friday afternoon, Del Rio Mayor Dora G. Alcalá's jubilation was only tinged with melancholy over the news of Wolters' pending promotion.

"That is awesome, but I am not at all surprised," Alcalá enthused. "If anyone deserves to be a general officer who's been through our base, it's Col. Wolters. He'll make a fine, fine general, because he's so very smart and a yet very caring person. But it's sort of bittersweet, because I know he'll be leaving us for a new assignment," Alcalá said.

Wolters commands a flying training operation that typically manages 90,000 sorties annually, producing 105,000 hours of flying in the same period. The base's military strength of 1,376 airmen, non-commissioned officers and officers, is augmented by 1,114 civilian employees.

With an operating budget of more than \$175 million, Wolters has oversight for the training and graduation of hundreds of new Air Force pilots annually.

He and his wife, Charlene, moved to Laughlin from Langley Air Force Base, Va. where Wolters commanded the 1st Operations Group. During that assignment, he deployed to Iraq where he commanded the 485th Air Expeditionary Wing in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Wolters, a command pilot, has logged more than 4,600 hours in at least five Air Force aircraft, but considers himself "an F-15C driver" in theaters of war, such as Iraq. The F-15 "Eagle" is an air superiority

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tactical fighter, heavily armed with missiles and guns.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1982, and a Master's in Aeronautical Science Technology in 1996, from Embry Riddle Aero University.

In addition to Langley and Laughlin, Wolters' career has led him to 21 assignments in Texas, New Mexico, Florida, California, Nevada, Hawaii, Alaska, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. and Germany.

Wolters was predictably modest about the honor unfolding in his career. General officer nomination comes to about one percent of all career officers in the Air Force, but Wolters is chalking up the promotion to his coworkers and support of the Del Rio community.

"It's a real thrill," Wolters admitted Friday afternoon, adding, "We found out about it just two hours ago. They keep these things held pretty closely... But the support for the military community at Laughlin has as much to do with it as anything. It makes it really rewarding when you can share something like this with a great community."

Pressed for some explanation for his selection as one of only 32 Air Force colonels forwarded to the White House for the signal honor, Wolters would only say, "Well, it's consistent with performance, and if you take a look at what Laughlin can do, it's a reflection of how the community helps us."

According to Alcalá, however, Wolters' personal determination and support was instrumental in securing funding to begin planning and construction of an alternative to the base's main gate intersection with the Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

"He's really been pushing that through. I know it's going to happen, it's really on our doorstep now," said Alcalá, "and it wouldn't happen without his involvement and support."

Wolters, on the other hand, credits his predecessor, Col. Dan Woodward with much of the accomplishments at Laughlin.

"I'm really pleased that we inherited a wing in great shape, allowing us to continue marching down the path of warfighters, continuing to fine tune what we do for an expeditionary Air Force. Our young airmen now are as expeditionary as can be," Wolters said.

Garry Stehle, chairman of the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee, expressed delight upon hearing of Wolters' nomination by the president.

"Great! Wonderful!" Stehle exclaimed Friday afternoon. "He needs to get all the accolades we can give him; he's a good guy."

Stehle commented, too, on the "mutual admiration society" nurtured between the base and the local community, echoing Wolters' sentiment that Del Rioans are steadfast in support of Laughlin.

"Col. Wolters has definitely continued to promote the friendship between Laughlin and the city," Stehle said.

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### **War goes well, Self tells base council**

By GARRICK FELDMAN  
Leader Publisher

The top commander at Little Rock Air Force Base says the war in Iraq is going much better than the way the media are portraying the fighting there.

Brig. Gen. Kip Self, commander of the 314th Airlift Wing, told members of the Little Rock Air Force Base Community Council on Monday that progress is being made in Iraq despite the bloodshed there.

“Every day, Iraq improves,” Self said.

Schools, roads, hospitals and other infrastructure are being built every day, while the Iraqi military is taking more responsibility in the fight against the insurgents.

The base has played a key role in the Iraqi war, as it has in Afghanistan and before that in the first Gulf war.

“Afghanistan is the benchmark,” the general said. “We’ve done amazing things.”

He said more than 400 personnel from Little Rock Air Force Base are deployed in the Iraq and Afghanistan war zones, and more will be on the way in January.

Several C-130s are deployed in those areas, along with more than 50 others, including two C-130Js, from other bases.

The general said the C-130s are dependable carriers that can make long and short deliveries and stay in theater for a long time.

Self would not be specific on how many more planes and new personnel LRAFB would gain after the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations are implemented.

“BRAC is good news for Little Rock,” Self said. “We’re not going to get worse.”

Under a Pentagon recommendation that called for shutting down scores of military facilities, the base here would have received several dozen more planes and some 4,000 new personnel, but the commission did not accept all of the Pentagon’s recommendations and voted to keep several more bases open, reducing the number of new missions here.

President Bush and the House of Representatives have accepted the BRAC Commission recommendations, and the Senate is expected to follow suit.

The latest estimate is that the base will get a handful of new planes and perhaps a few hundred more personnel.

“We train the best crews and maintain the best planes,” the general told the community council.

*The Leader*

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“If we’re not better tomorrow than we were today, I have failed you,” Self said.

He told the luncheon that Gen. William R. Looney, the new commander of the Air Education and Training Command — which operates Little Rock Air Force Base — has asked the base to reach out to community members and let them fly the planes assigned to the base and see for themselves how their tax dollars are spent.

“I have a mandate from Gen. Looney to get council people in the air,” Self said.

He invited council members to fly with him in one of the C-130Js to see how the new planes measure up.

Self also pointed out that new construction continues on base all the time, including new housing now under private management.

“Little Rock Air Force Base is a model for other bases,” the general said.

“We’re in this together,” Self said. “I cannot do this job without you.”

*The Leader*

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